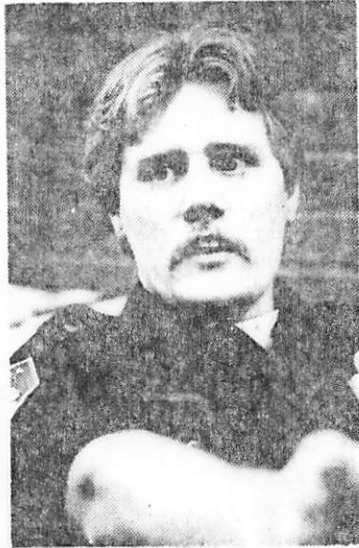


Ambulance Drivers List Do's, Don't's of Confronting an Emergency Vehicle

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the article in a series examining challenges of ambulance drivers working with motorists.



Dave Thomas

Ambulance driver Dave Thomas believes part of the reason motorists ignore emergency vehicles traveling with lights and sirens is because they are uncertain of the law and are not sure they should do. So he is making a video with Brigham Young University that can be shown to groups.

Thomas says now the only exception with the law regarding emergency vehicles (lights and sirens) is in the Utah driver's handbook. He says people may fail for their driver test and forget.

Thomas hopes the video will be viewed by various public agencies and schools and create public awareness. He hopes the result will be to make it easier for drivers of emergency vehicles like himself to get through traffic in time to save a life.

Paramedic Reed Rieske says that uncertainty is certainly part of the problem.

As soon as some drivers notice flashing lights they will either break apparently not knowing what they are supposed to do, says Thomas. But many drivers seem uncertain, they just do not care and hold their ground instead of pulling over to the side and stopping.

Every once in a while, we get a courteous driver who pulls over for us, but they are in the wrong place.

Thomas says there are five problem areas in the relationship of code 3 vehicles and motorists on roadways that he touched on in his video: The first one is simple. The courteous motorists in both lanes pull over to the right and

paramedic Craig Lidz says the main reason for that is that code 3 vehicles are not supposed to travel in the left lane and that lane clear to rush emergency.

They need to stop because the vehicle may need to make a right or left turn on a street, a side street or drive-

way. Motorists who only pull over but don't stop could cause a collision or slow a turning code 3 vehicle down.

2. Thomas says motorists are also legally responsible to safely yield to code 3 vehicles.

"What to do at a red light? They (motorists) don't know what to do at a red light," says Thomas. In this area, he notices the most confusion.

"They sit in front of you. You're honking your horn, your siren is screaming and your lights are flashing. They don't want to blow the red light their stopped at."

If you've got a child in the back that is dying and maybe the emergency room's staff and equipment might save them, it's hard to be patient behind that car in front of you," Thomas admitted in these instances he has been discourteous and yelled at such motorists.

Thomas suggests at a red light the vehicle in the left lane blocking the path of a code 3 vehicle should make sure the intersection is clear and then cautiously pull into the intersection and turn right and then pull over and stop.

3. What to do when you are traveling on a roadway and an approaching emergency vehicle on an intersecting street is going to cross your street in front of you? "Do you lock and skid or do you put the pedal to the metal and look like you didn't see us?" Thomas wryly asks. "We suggest that if you can make a stop



Brian Tregaskis Photos

Public Safety Officer Dan Bishop confirms directions on a code three run.

safely then stop and let us cross in front of you. If you can't make a safe stop go through.

4. "Don't go through a fire or emergency scene and rubber neck us it causes congestion and adds to the problem."

5. "Don't follow us to a fire or other emergency. As soon as our firefighters arrive at a scene they may be jumping off a truck from all sides and we don't want a motorist who follows us to pass and hit one of us."

Thomas says another reason for

not following is because there is often other emergency vehicles rushing to the same emergency and a trailing motorist may impede them. Some emergency vehicles may join code 3 vehicles from side streets.

"I remember a run to Salt Lake City we had at 70 mph and a vehicle following us most the way. I guess he thought he got to Salt Lake faster sneaking behind us." Don't try it, he warns. "Anytime we see this we radio the highway patrol."

